

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are pending in the present application with claims 22-50 withdrawn. With entry of this Amendment, Applicant amends claims 1-8 and 11-19. Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

In certain types of substrate processing, substrates in two or more carriers are processed together as a single lot. The substrates of the first carrier are first transferred to the processing section and, then, the substrates of the second carrier are transferred. If the second carrier does not have the requisite number of substrates, the lot will be incomplete. This requires the already transferred substrates of the first carrier to be returned from the processing section, thereby adversely affecting throughput.

The present invention overcomes this situation through a carrier transfer device control section and an inspecting device. The inspecting device determines, for a given carrier, the number of substrates or their housed state. If the inspection results are favorable (e.g., the correct number of substrates are present), the control section controls the carrier transfer device to store the carrier on a carrier holding member. Once a predetermined number of carriers are stored on the holding members, the control section controls the carrier transfer device to place the carriers on a stage that allows the substrates in the carriers to be transferred into the liquid processing section. Processing is thus commenced only after the control section confirms the exemplary number of substrates for a lot. In this manner, the present invention avoids the above situation.

Applicant has amended independent claims 1 and 11 to better claim the invention. Claims 1 and 11, as amended, recite: "the carrier transfer device control section controls the carrier transfer device to store a carrier on the carrier holding members of the carrier stock section, when it is judged possible to apply a liquid processing to substrates in the carrier with reference to an inspection result obtained by the substrate inspecting device, and the carrier transfer device control section further controls the carrier transfer device, after a predetermined number of carriers are stored on the carrier holding members, to transfer the carriers from the carrier holding members to

the substrate delivery stage, thereby allowing substrates housed therein to be transferred into the liquid processing section by the substrate transfer section.” Support for this amendment is found through out the specification, including page 18, line 24 to page 19, line 9 and page 36, line 3 to page 41, line 7, and Fig. 5.

It should be noted that claims 1 and 11 have been further amended to better claim the invention, including defining the relationship between the carrier stock section and the substrate transfer section. Dependent claims 2-8 and 12-19 have been amended in view of the amendments to claims 1 and 11.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kaneko et al. (US 6009890) and Yoshioka et al. (US 6051349).

Applicant respectfully submits that neither Kaneko nor Yoshioka disclose the carrier transfer device control section performing the above recited control. Kaneko discloses a processing apparatus with a photo sensor detecting a notch on wafers (see, e.g., Col. 10, lines 32-50). As the Examiner concedes, Kaneko fails to disclose a carrier transfer device control section.

Yoshioka discloses a device for measuring the line width of a latent image exposed on the coated surface of a wafer. The measured data is provided to a CPU that adjusts later processing based on the received data (see, e.g., Col. 9, lines 24-59). It is believed that the Examiner is contending that it would have been obvious to combine the sensor of Kaneko with the CPU of Yoshioka to ensure proper processing.

Applicant respectfully notes that the recited control of the carrier transfer device control section performs a specific function. This function is to place carriers having passed an inspection on holding members and, when a predetermined number of carriers is reached, to transfer the carriers to a delivery stage. Kaneko or Yoshioka do not disclose a control section that performs this function. Indeed, in Yoshioka, the CPU does not control the transfer of carriers based on the line width measures. The CPU controls baking and development conditions (see Fig. 5). Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-21 are patentable in view of Kaneko and Yoshioka.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.


Finally, in the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that no claims are generic. As explained in the response dated February 15, 2005, Applicant believes that claim 1 is a generic claim.

If, for any reason, the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, Applicant requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned attorney at the Los Angeles telephone number (213) 892-5630 to discuss any steps necessary to place the application in condition for allowance.

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing Docket No. 514312000100.

Dated: October 18, 2005

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